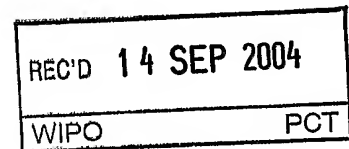




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I, JULIE BILLINGSLEY, TEAM LEADER EXAMINATION SUPPORT AND SALES hereby certify that annexed is a true copy of the Provisional specification in connection with Application No. 2003904611 for a patent by JOHN THOMAS FLANAGAN as filed on 27 August 2003.



WITNESS my hand this
Seventh day of September 2004

JULIE BILLINGSLEY
TEAM LEADER EXAMINATION
SUPPORT AND SALES

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PROVISIONAL SPECIFICATION

Invention Title: "SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR
FACILITATING RESPONSIBLE
BEHAVIOUR"

The invention is described in the following statement:

TITLE

SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR FACILITATING RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOUR

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

5 The invention relates to the field of behaviour and a system and method for facilitating responsible behaviour. In particular, although not exclusively, the invention relates to a system and method that aids the prevention and detection of problem gambling and the provision of assistance for problem gambling. However, it is envisaged that the present invention is applicable to compulsive
10 addictive behaviour other than gambling, such as, but not limited to alcoholism and shopping.

BACKGROUND TO THE INVENTION

15 Problem behaviour, that can easily and quickly become compulsive addictive behaviour, is manifest in many forms such as gambling, shopping, alcoholism, substance abuse, spending, such as with credit cards, borrowing and other such activities.

20 For example, gaming or gambling in all its forms, whether it be placing bets on horse races or football matches, playing gaming tables such as roulette, black jack or craps in casinos or playing slot machines (the "pokies"), is a very popular pastime. For example, it has been estimated that there are approximately 3 million people who gamble regularly in the state of Victoria, Australia alone, representing approximately 15% of the Australian population.

25 In addition to the excitement and entertainment that gambling provides, gambling also provides the opportunity to win large sums of money. However,

all too often gambling involves the gambler losing money and gambling further in an attempt to recoup their losses. It is well known that gambling can also become addictive.

5 The consequences of such problem gambling are not limited to the problem gambler going into financial debt, but extend to the friends and family of the problem gambler and the wider community as a whole with such knock on effects as theft in order to obtain money with which to gamble, stress and the loss of employment.

10 For example, in Australia 2.1% of gamblers are estimated to have a gambling problem. 140,000 gamblers are estimated to have a severe gambling problem with 1 in 10 having seriously contemplated suicide due to their gambling habits. Since 1992, some 7,200 children in Victoria, Australia have become homeless due to problem gambling and some 30,000 families in Victoria were adversely affected by problem gambling in 2000/2001. Underage gambling is
15 also a problem with an estimated 200,000 adolescent gamblers in Australia. Adolescent gambling is particularly detrimental since the individual is less likely to have a disposable income to fund the pursuit and the education of the adolescent usually suffers as a consequence of their gambling.

20 Currently, there is minimal assistance for problem gamblers. One form of assistance is provided by self-help groups such as Gamblers Anonymous. However, such assistance relies on the gambler firstly recognising their problem and secondly the gambler seeking help for themselves. In such situations, the problem has already occurred and a solution needs to be found. Casinos may display responsible gambling notices, advice and telephone numbers where
25 assistance may be sought, but again these rely on self-help and the provision of

assistance once the problem has occurred. In any event, casinos and other gaming establishments are in the business of generating revenue and they do not want to deter gamblers who are capable of gambling within their limits and who have the willpower to stop gambling of their own volition.

5 A corollary of the situation is that despite the aforementioned detrimental effects of problem gambling, gambling in general generates enormous revenue for governments and as a result governments have become dependent to a certain extent on such revenue for the provision of various government services.

10 The issue and associated consequences of problem gambling and addicted gamblers have become reasonably common knowledge and the public backlash has included calls for the curtailment of gambling venues and tighter restrictions on gambling. Many are worried that gambling may be outlawed altogether, which would not only deprive millions of people of the entertainment provided by gambling, but would also result in the loss of thousands of jobs and
15 a substantial deficit in government funds.

Despite the above estimates and survey evidence and the recognition that a real problem exists, a further problem is that there is a lack of objective data and statistics that can be relied upon with certainty.

20 One attempt at addressing one aspect of the problem has been the limited introduction by casinos of individual gambling limits, whereby gamblers impose their own monetary limits on their gambling. However, this system is purely voluntary and is likely to only be used by gamblers who are reasonably responsible in the first place and therefore less likely to become problem gamblers. Furthermore, the system is open to abuse since the gambler can
25 merely gamble at an alternative venue or choose not to use any casino

membership card they may have to enable them to continue gambling if their self-imposed limit has been reached or exceeded.

The aforementioned problems and consequences in relation to gambling are often equally applicable to other problem/compulsive addictive behaviour such as alcoholism, other substance abuse, shopping and spending.

Hence, there is a need for a system, method and/or apparatus for facilitating responsible behaviour that identifies those with a problem or those exhibiting behaviour that may become problematic, aids sufferers seek assistance, preferably prevents the behaviour from becoming more problematic, such as becoming compulsive addictive behaviour and/or prevents further pursuit of the behaviour if it has become problematic. In relation to, for example, gambling, there is a need for a system, method and/or apparatus that identifies those with a gambling problem or those exhibiting behaviour that may become problematic, aids problem gamblers seek assistance, preferably prevents gamblers from becoming problem gamblers and/or prevents identified problem gamblers from further gambling. Another desirable characteristic is a system, method and/or apparatus that can collate statistics to enable more accurate assessment and monitoring of problem behaviour that can be utilised to ameliorate the problem behaviour further.

In this specification, the terms "comprises", "comprising" or similar terms are intended to mean a non-exclusive inclusion, such that a method, system or apparatus that comprises a list of elements does not include those elements solely, but may well include other elements not listed.

In this specification, the term "gambler" is intended to mean any person who interacts with a gambling facility and is not limited to persons who may be

classified as gamblers, who gamble on a regular basis or gamble a particular amount of money. Similarly, terms referring to people partaking of other activities, such as "shopper", "borrower" or "consumer of intoxicating substances", are not limited to persons who partake in these activities to any
5 predetermined extent.

DISCLOSURE OF THE INVENTION

In one form, although it need not be the only or indeed the broadest form, the invention resides in a system for facilitating responsible behaviour, said
10 system comprising:

an identification means for storing information about an entity;

a facility for facilitating pursuit of said behaviour;

a storage means coupled to be in communication with said facility, said storage means also storing information about said entity;

15 wherein, at least some of said information stored by said identification means is compared with at least some of said information stored by said storage means to check whether said entity is permitted to partake in said behaviour; and,

20 wherein, if said entity is permitted to partake in said behaviour, information about said entity's behaviour via said facility is communicated to said storage means.

Suitably, said behaviour may be gambling, shopping, spending, borrowing, the consumption of substances, such as alcohol, or other intoxicating substances or the like.

25 Suitably, said entity may be an individual such as a gambler, shopper or

consumer of intoxicating substances.

Suitably, said identification means comprises said storage means.

Alternatively, said storage means is remote from said identification means and coupled to be in communication with said facility via a communications network.

In another form, the invention resides in a system for facilitating responsible gambling, said system comprising:

an identification means for storing information about a gambler;

a gambling facility for facilitating gambling;

a storage means coupled to be in communication with said gambling facility, said storage means also storing information about said gambler;

wherein, at least some of said information stored by said identification means is compared with at least some of said information stored by said storage means to check whether said gambler is permitted to gamble; and,

wherein, if said gambler is permitted to gamble, information about said gambler's gambling via said gambling facility is communicated to said storage means.

Suitably, said identification means comprises said storage means.

Alternatively, said storage means is remote from said identification means and coupled to be in communication with said gambling facility via a communications network.

Preferably, said system compares said information about said gambler's gambling against at least one predetermined limit or trigger stored for said gambler and if said limit or trigger is reached/activated, said gambler is warned that said limit or trigger has been reached/activated. A gambler's continued

participation may or may not be blocked or otherwise affected by the gambler and/or an appropriate authorized other party at their discretion.

Preferably, said system further includes a modeler module coupled to be in communication with said storage means for periodically comparing information about said gambler's gambling against at least one predetermined criterion to
5 identify problem gambling or potentially problem gambling.

In another form, the invention resides in a method for facilitating responsible behaviour, said method including the steps of:

reading information from an identification means of an entity via a facility
10 for pursuing said behaviour;

comparing said information from said identification means with information about said entity stored in a storage means coupled to be in communication with said facility to check whether said entity is permitted to partake in said behaviour;

where said entity is permitted to partake in said behaviour, communicating
15 information about said entity's behaviour via said facility to said storage means.

Suitably, said behaviour may be gambling, shopping, spending, borrowing, the consumption of substances, such as alcohol, or other intoxicating substances or the like.

Suitably, said entity may be an individual such as a gambler, shopper or
20 consumer of intoxicating substances.

Suitably, said identification means comprises said storage means.

Alternatively, said storage means is remote from said identification means and coupled to be in communication with said facility via a communications network.

25 In a further form, the invention resides in a method for facilitating

responsible gambling, said method including the steps of:

reading information from an identification means of a gambler via a gambling facility;

5 comparing said information from said identification means with information about said gambler stored in a storage means coupled to be in communication with said gambling facility to check whether said gambler is permitted to gamble;

where said gambler is permitted to gamble, communicating information about said gambler's gambling via said gambling facility to said storage means.

Suitably, said identification means comprises said storage means.

10 Alternatively, said storage means is remote from said identification means and coupled to be in communication with said facility via a communications network.

Preferably, the method further includes the step of comparing said information about said gambler's gambling against at least one predetermined
15 limit and/or trigger stored for said gambler and warning said gambler if said limit and/or trigger has been reached.

Preferably, the method further includes the step of periodically comparing information about said gambler's gambling against at least one predetermined criterion to identify problem gambling or potentially problem gambling.

20 Further features of the present invention will become apparent from the following detailed description.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

To assist in understanding the invention and to enable a person skilled in
25 the art to put the invention into practical effect preferred embodiments of the

invention will be described by way of example only with reference to the accompanying drawings, wherein:

FIG 1 shows the system according to the present invention;

5 FIG 2 shows examples of information that may be stored by the identification means of the system shown in FIG 1;

FIG 3 is a schematic representation of some of the elements of the system and some of the method steps of the present invention;

FIG 4 shows an example of identification criteria for identifying problem gambling and potentially problem gambling;

10 FIG 5 shows criteria that may be considered to classify gamblers; and

FIG 6 shows activities that may take place once a gambler has been classified.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

15 The present invention will be described in relation to a system and method for facilitating responsible gambling. However, it will be appreciated that the present invention is not limited to this application and it may be applied to other forms of behaviour that may become problematic or compulsive addictive, such as, but not limited to, shopping, the consumption of intoxicating substances
20 such as alcohol, borrowing or spending money and the like. Hence, the reader will appreciate that reference herein to, for example, a gambler, in another application of the present invention, may refer to another relevant entity, such as a shopper, a borrower, a spender or a consumer of intoxicating substances. Similarly, reference herein to a gambling facility, in another application may be,
25 for example, a shopping facility such as an EFTPOS machine or ATM.

Furthermore, the models and criteria for diagnosing "at risk", problem and/or compulsive addictive behaviour referred to herein will vary depending on the particular application of the present invention.

Embodiments of the present invention will be described with reference to a gamer/gambler playing a gaming table such as, but not limited to, a roulette table, craps table or black jack table or a slot machine ("pokie") at a venue such as a casino or club. However, it will be appreciated that the present invention is not limited to these applications and the present invention may be employed in other gambling scenarios such as betting shops, racecourses for horses, greyhounds, trotting and the like, other competition venues, Internet gambling, Keno, lotto and the like.

With reference to FIG 1, the system 2 of the present invention comprises one or more gambling facilities 4 such as a roulette table, electronic gaming machine (e.g. poker machine) or the like that may be coupled to be in communication with a venue computer 6 by, for example, a local area network (LAN) 8. The venue computer 6 is coupled to be in communication with a broker/updater module 10. The broker/updater module 10 is coupled to be in communication with local storage means in the form of local database 12, which is offline and only accessible by the venue computer 6 via the broker/updater module 10. The broker/updater module 10 is coupled to be in communication with a central operations center 14 via a communications network 16 such as the Internet. Although the central operations center 14 is shown in FIG 1 as being in a separate location from the gaming venue, it will be appreciated that the system of the present invention is not limited to such an arrangement and the central operations center 14 may reside within a gaming venue.

Central operations center 14 comprises a storage means in the form of central database 18, which is coupled to be in communication with a searcher module 20, a resolver module 22, a modeler module 24, an application module 26, a referrer module 28 and a reporter module 30.

5 The system 2 also comprises identification means 32 to identify a gamer/gambler that may be in the form of, for example, a card comprising a magnetic strip or an integrated circuit for storing information relating to the gambler. Alternatively, the identification means could be a key ring or other device capable of transmitting a signal, such as an RF signal, indicative of
10 information stored in the identification means. A person skilled in the art will appreciate that the present invention is not limited to the particular type of identification means employed.

 The present invention requires that every person within a particular jurisdiction, e.g. state, territory, county or other area, wishing to gamble holds an
15 identification means 32. Without identification means 32 the gambler is unable to gamble. In a preferred embodiment, for security purposes the identification means 32 comprises information in the form of only a number or other unique identifier for the gambler and no other information. The balance of the information relating to the gambler is stored on the central database 18 to
20 facilitate efficient and economical central updating of the information relating to the gambler. This obviates the costly and inconvenient necessity of having to update information on the identification means 32 or having to reissue replacement identification means. This embodiment also enables any regulatory changes and/or requirements that may affect the information to be effected
25 easily.

Alternatively, identification means 32 may comprise the additional information shown in FIG. 2 in a storage means, the information being stored therein depending on the option selected. Therefore, in another embodiment, the identification means 32 may be in the form of a card comprising a magnetic strip and a storage means in the form of an integrated circuit with the unique identifier stored by the magnetic strip and further information, such as that shown in FIG 2, stored in the integrated circuit. Depending on the type of behaviour with which the present invention is concerned, the mandatory and optional information exemplified in FIG. 2 may differ.

The first option, wherein the identification means is in the form of a card, the card stores the following mandatory information: identification number, sex, disposable income, an age range in which the gambler fits and proof of age. For this option, the card may also store the following optional information: name, address and email address, date of birth, one or more self-imposed gambling limits and/or one or more self-initiated blocks that can prevent the owner of the card from gambling. Since the gambler may acquire the identification means 32 to enable gambling without providing a name and address, resources will be directed to the gambling facility 4 next used by the gambler, which will be identified when the gambler uses their identification means.

In the second option as shown in FIG 2, the card stores the following mandatory information: identification number, name, address and email address, date of birth, sex, disposable income, and a proof of age. For this option, the card may also store one or more self-imposed gambling limits and/or a self-initiated block. Since an address is provided, resources may be directed to this known point. However, in the event that the gambler has moved or the address

provided is false, resources can be directed to the gambler as described above for the first option.

5 The self-imposed gambling limits and/or self-initiated blocks can be tailored to the gambler's needs. Alternatively or concurrently limits and/or blocks and/or triggers can be imposed by other authorized parties as well as the gambler. For example, a block may be for all but \$2 gaming machines to prevent the gambler from playing higher stake games. One or more blocks for one or more machines may be included as required. A block may prevent the gambler from gambling at particular times and/or on particular days, e.g., when 10 the gambler receives their wages/salary or during certain hours when the gambler is likely to be, for example, intoxicated and more reckless with their gambling.

15 The broker/updater module 10, which may be a single module or two separate modules, i.e. a broker module and an updater module, receives enquiries from and communicates data to the gambling facility 4 via the venue computer 6 to, for example, check the status of the information relating to the gambler held on the identification means 32. Checking a gambler's status is usually via the communication network 16 by interrogating information stored about the gambler in the central database 18. However, if the communication 20 network 16 is not functioning or the broker/updater module 10 is offline for any other reason, checking of the gambler's status may be carried out by interrogating the offline local database 12 and/or the identification means 32 and returning the gambler's status to the gambling facility 4. The broker/updater module 10 is also responsible for encrypting and storing data received from the 25 identification means 32 and transmitting the encrypted data over the

communications network to the central operations center 14.

5 The resolver module 22 receives the encrypted data from the broker/updater module 10 via the communications network 16. Once the resolver module 22 decrypts the encrypted data and updates the central database 18, the stored venue record is deleted. The resolver module 22 checks for self-imposed limits and/or any other limits or triggers. If they exist and are exceeded/activated, a block is placed on the identification means 32 to prevent the gambler, at their discretion or at the discretion of an appropriately authorized other party, from gambling further. If there is a status change, the
10 offline local database 12 and/or identification means 32 is updated, for example, via a batch update.

The application module 26 processes system membership applications and therefore is accessible over the communications network 16 by the public. It allows for processing of applications by mail and generates a relationship
15 between the system 2, the identification means 32 and the public. The application module 26 is responsible for updating the central database 18 and the venue offline local database 12.

The modeler module 24 performs daily comparisons of the information of all gamblers stored in the central database 18 against one or more stored
20 models describing "at risk" gambling, problem gambling and compulsive/addictive gambling. The modeler 24 then generates a list of those gamblers that meet the criteria of an "at risk" gambler, problem gambler and/or a compulsive/addictive gambler. The list is forwarded to a referral service provider, e.g. counseling. The referral service provider and their activities will be
25 described in more detail hereinafter. The modeler 24 also separates the

personal information of the gambler from the unique identifier associated with the identification means 32.

The referrer module 28 updates the records generated by the modeler module 24 and performs updates of the records in the central database 18 depending on whether or not there is any action taken by the referral service. For example, a gambler may be referred for counseling to help their gambling problem, but an offer of such help may be declined, as described in more detail hereinafter. The referrer module 24 updates the records in the central database 18 to indicate that the gambler is receiving counseling. The referrer module 24 is also responsible for updating voluntary blocks on gambling created in the central database 18 and releasing such blocks as appropriate. Furthermore, the referrer module 24 is also responsible for updating and removing self-imposed limits stored in the central database 18 and outputting the net result of the referral.

The reporter module 30 is responsible for generating statistics in the system and method of the present invention such as, but not limited to usage by a gambler per gambling facility 4, such as per poker machine 34, demographic and socioeconomic statistics, revenue statistics and the like. The reporter module 30 also monitors statistics such as a payback ratio of the gaming institution, gambling facility productivity, loyalty data for gamblers and institutions and gambling problem identification rates.

A searcher module 20 may also be employed to search for data from the central database 18 as required by the various modules 22, 24, 26, 28, 30 of the central operations center and/or the venue computer 6 and/or broker/updater module 10 of the venue.

The method of the present invention will now be described with reference to FIG 3.

If a gambler wishes to use a gambling facility 4 in the form of, for example, a poker machine 34 or a gaming table 36, the identification means 32 in the form of, for example, a card must be inserted into a reader (not shown) fitted to the machine 34. The card must remain in the machine 34 throughout the duration of play to ensure that the gambler can only play a single machine at a time. Alternatively, the identification means may permit the gambler to play a predetermined number of machines simultaneously or cumulatively, e.g. in a predetermined time period, such as in a 12 hour period between specified times. For example, the identification means may permit the gambler to play 5 machines simultaneously or 20 machines in one night.

When the card is inserted into the machine 34, the broker/updater module 10 initiates a check of the status of the gambler via the communications network 16 and the central operations center 14 to verify whether any blocks are in place for that gambler. If, for example, a self-initiated block, and/or a block created by another authorized party is in place, approval to gamble is declined and a communication to this effect is returned to the poker machine 34 preventing the gambler from gambling. Prevention from gambling may be achieved by physically disabling the machine using any suitable electronic and/or mechanical means known in the art. Where no blocks are in place, gambling is permitted on that machine. If the identification means 32 is reported as stolen, a block will be placed on the identification means 32 preventing gambling via that identification means 32.

In the case where the gambling facility is, for example, a gaming table

such as roulette, a dealer at the table must use the identification means 32 to check that the gambler is permitted to gamble. Once a gambler is verified as permitted to gamble or otherwise, as described above, the gambler's money may be exchanged for chips by the dealer to enable the gambler to participate.

5 Once the gambler is permitted to gamble, a cumulative amount of money gambled and total gambling time are monitored and periodically communicated to the central operation center 14 via the communications network 16. The cumulative amount of money gambled and total gambling time values are compared against self-imposed limits/triggers and/or any appropriately
10 authorized other party imposed limits and/or triggers and if the limit and/or trigger is exceeded the gambler is notified. Whether the gambler is permitted to override the limit is determined by the gambler and/or the appropriately authorized other party when the gambler applies for the identification means 32 or afterwards. Any overrides of the limits are recorded against the gamblers
15 personal record for later reporting to the gambler, which provides valuable data for analysis. When the identification means 32 is removed from the gaming machine or swiped at a cashier point, e.g. when a gambler cashes in their chips, the central database 18 is updated with the gambler's activity. The update will include, but is not limited to, amount gambled, time spent gambling, money won
20 or lost, credits won or lost, machine or gambling facility identification and/or venue and/or if a gambler has requested a copy of their gambling history.

 With reference to action 38 in FIG 3, periodically, e.g. daily, weekly or monthly, the modeler 24 compares the records of information stored in the central database 18 for each gambler against one or more models for identifying
25 "at risk", problem, compulsive and/or addictive gambling. If the identification

criteria for "at risk", problem, compulsive and/or addictive gambling are not met 40, no action is taken 42. If the criteria are met 44, a counseling process is initiated 46 based on the identification number or other unique identifier of each identification means held by a gambler meeting the criteria.

5 An example of the identification criteria for identifying problem, compulsive and/or addictive gambling is shown in FIG 4. In step 50, the amount gambled is determined as an overall win or loss. Where the gambler has won as shown in step 52, no action is taken, step 54. Where the gambler has lost as shown in step 56, the magnitude of the loss is compared against an income, or
10 income bracket of the gambler, as represented by step 58. The income value may be, for example, a disposable income or an amount the gambler is prepared, or can afford, to lose, as specified by the gambler upon applying for the identification means 32. Alternatively, an income or income bracket may be obtained by referring to records of the taxation office of the jurisdiction in which
15 the venue is situated. With reference to step 60, if the loss is determined to be affordable by the gambler, no action for this identification criteria check is taken. However, with reference to step 62, if the loss is determined not to be affordable by the gambler, if this is a once off occurrence of an unaffordable loss for the gambler, as shown in step 64, in this example, no action is taken as shown in
20 step 66. However, the criteria may be set up such that any unaffordable loss and/or a trigger, e.g. a gambler not requesting a copy of their historical behaviour over a period of time, results in further action. With reference to step 68, if the unaffordable loss fails the frequency and referral model, e.g. the unaffordable loss exceeds a predetermined number of unaffordable losses for that gambler in
25 a particular period, the gambler is referred to counseling as shown in step 70.

The model used in the present invention to identify problem gambling and/or compulsive gambling incorporates developments of known criteria from the internationally recognized Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-1V), Edition 4 and the South Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS) for problem gambling, but draws conclusions based on actual gambling behaviour recorded for each respective gambler and is not reliant on the honesty or accuracy of the gambler. The model of the present invention is based on statistical modeling and current psychological understanding and includes the ability for an appropriately authorized other party to specify limits and/or triggers that can be imposed on the gambler. It is also dynamic in that it relies on up to date information as well as historical behaviour patterns. However, the reader will appreciate that the present invention is not limited to the particular DSM-1V and/or SOGS criteria specified herein and suitable alternative criteria developed by other institutes for identifying problem behaviour and the like may be employed.

The identification criteria include research-based criteria, demographic criteria and current criteria obtained from the gambler's activities as monitored and recorded by the system of the present invention. Research-based criteria include an acceleration criterion, whereby the gambling involves increasing amounts of money, a chasing losses criterion, whereby gambling increases after significant losses are incurred, a frequency criterion, which involves the number of days spent gambling, a duration criterion, which involves the duration of each gambling session and a income proportion criterion that involves the proportion of the gambler's disposable income spent on gambling. Demographic criteria include the disposable income of the gambler, their age and the proportion of

their time spent employed.

FIG 5 shows the various criteria that may be considered to aid classification of a gambler as a low "at risk" gambler, a high "at risk" gambler or a problem gambler. For example, where a gambler's activity meets the research-based criteria of acceleration, chasing losses, frequency and duration, the gambler would be classified as a high "at risk" gambler.

FIG 6 shows the various activities that may take place where a gambler is classified as a low "at risk" gambler 94, a high "at risk" gambler 96 or a problem gambler 98. With reference to step 100, once a gambler is identified as falling into one of the aforementioned categories, a low "at risk" gambler may be monitored more closely, e.g. by comparing a gambler's behaviour against the identification criteria on a more regular basis. The low "at risk" gambler may be offered counseling that may result in no problem being identified, as shown in step 80 in FIG 4. Alternatively, as shown in step 102 in FIG 6, the offer of counseling may be declined, which is recorded by the central database 18, but the gambler remains accountable. This may also apply for a high "at risk" gambler or a problem gambler.

With reference to step 104 in FIG 6, a high "at risk" gambler may administer a SOGS themselves, or an alternative version, such as SOGS-R (Revision R) or a suitable alternative instrument as referred to above. The high "at risk" gambler may be provided with a copy of their gambling history and a profile along with a profile of a problem gambler for comparison. This has the potential to highlight the nature and extent of the problem to the gambler and allows them to take responsibility for their actions. They are also provided with further information and support. These activities may also take place for a

problem gambler, as shown in step 106, except that the SOGS-R is performed by an administrator and the administrator informs the gambler of further support, since the problem gambler is perceived as requiring further assistance that a high "at risk" gambler.

5 With reference to step 108, a problem gambler may alternatively receive a diagnostic interview with a counselor followed by being provided with their gambling history and profile. This can be compared with that of a problem gambler to help highlight the problem. The counselor can then direct the gambler to receive further support. In each case, the central database 18 is
10 updated with the results of the activities.

Referring to FIG 3, where counseling is offered 72 to the gambler, it may be declined 74 by the gambler. The fact that the gambler refused counseling is recorded 76 by the central database 18 against that gambler's record. If counseling is accepted 76, this is also recorded 78 by the central database 18
15 against that gambler's record.

With reference to FIG 4, where counseling is accepted, counseling may determine that no problem exists as represented by step 80. Alternatively, a problem may be confirmed, as shown in step 82. The gambler may then enter a counseling program, step 84 and a block will be placed on the gambler's
20 identification means 32, as shown in step 86, to prevent further gambling. With reference to step, 88, the gambler then attends multiple counseling sessions, which may include contact with an individual counselor, psychiatrist and/or psychologist, group therapy, support group work and/or financial counseling/planning. It is envisaged that counseling may be at an individual or
25 family unit level. The self-imposed limits and blocking features of the

identification means provide the gambler with a self-management tool and may provide a basis for valuable treatment strategies. As represented by step 90, when the counselor, psychiatrist and/or psychologist consider that the gambler has received sufficient treatment, the gambler may be cleared for further gambling. As represented by step 92, the block will be removed from their identification means 32 to permit gambling and the card preferably comprises new or updated limits to carefully monitor the gambler's activities to identify any further problems. The updated limits will be recorded in the central database 18.

The system and method also accommodates interstate and overseas visitors by issuing visiting gamblers with an identification means 32 such as a card as described above upon the provision of suitable identification. Where the system and method of the present invention are implemented on a national basis, interstate visitors will be subject to the counseling referral aspect of the invention. It is envisaged that overseas visitors would not be subject to the counseling referral aspect, although it could be feasible. For statistical purposes, data from both interstate and overseas visitors would be stored in the central database 18. So called "high rollers" would also be issued with an identification means and their statistical data stored as described above, although the duty of care issues remain with the gaming establishment in which the high roller is playing.

The method and system of the present invention thus provide a solution to problematic and/or compulsive addictive behaviour such as problem gambling. This is achieved by preventing anyone from partaking in certain behaviour in a particular jurisdiction without the identification means 32, the identification means having been acquired on the basis of a minimum of information about the entity,

thus preserving their privacy. The system and method provide an early indication of at risk entities, such as gamblers, on the basis of actual behaviour monitored by the system and can offer counseling before a problem develops rather than afterwards. The rapid identification of any problem enables the system and method to target limited counseling resources to at risk and problem entities rapidly, thus reducing the likelihood of longer term counseling being necessary.

The system and method does not rely on the entity recognizing their problem and/or referring themselves for help once the problem has occurred and brings the entities' behaviour to their attention. If a problem occurs, the statistical information provides all the necessary data to evidence the problem to the entity. The system and method does not rely on the entity honestly disclosing their compulsive addictive habits or accurately remembering them. The present invention also prevents underage participation in particular activities/behaviour since a person cannot obtain the identification means if they are under the legal age for the activity and cannot partake in the activity without the identification means.

Furthermore, the system and method makes the individual responsible and accountable, but provides multiple mechanisms for receiving assistance if a problem occurs, the nature of the assistance depending on the extent of their problem. Nonetheless, the system and method do not infringe on civil liberties since entities are permitted to partake in a legal activity and maintain their privacy. Entities are also permitted to access their record held by the central database 18 at any time upon request, as shown at 110 in FIG 3.

The system and method provide an accurate and objective database of

statistics that enables the industry concerned and government to address and monitor the issue of problem behaviour and provide additional services to associated groups. The reliable, accurate statistics derived from real activities will serve to ameliorate the sometimes excessive and unfounded responses of certain sectors to problem/compulsive addictive behaviour such as gambling.

The collated statistics can: facilitate monitoring of payouts of electronic gambling machines and other forms of gambling facilities; help determine the appropriateness of the quantity and distribution of facilities that enable pursuit of behavior such as gambling, consumption of intoxicating substances and the like; provide patterns of "normal" and "abnormal" behaviour within a particular jurisdiction at any point in time; provide guidance to members of the relevant industry, governmental and regulatory bodies; provide loyalty and frequent participation data to those offering the facilities with the entity's permission; evidence the exercising of a duty of care to participants of the relevant behaviour; determine the potential sustainability of particular forms of behaviour, such as borrowing or gambling and particular forms of it; and report on the extent of the problem according to the particular definition and/or classification of the problem.

The self-imposed limits and blocks and/or limits, triggers and blocks imposed by an appropriately authorized other party that may be associated with the identification means provide a mechanism for the entity to restrain their behaviour that doesn't rely on the entity's will power whilst in the throes of pursuing their behaviour. Such blocks, limits and triggers may also result in more successful treatment than a total block on any particular behaviour, such as gambling, in the event that a problem arises.

Throughout the specification the aim has been to describe the invention without limiting the invention to any one embodiment or specific collection of features. Persons skilled in the relevant art may realize variations from the specific embodiments that will nonetheless fall within the scope of the invention.

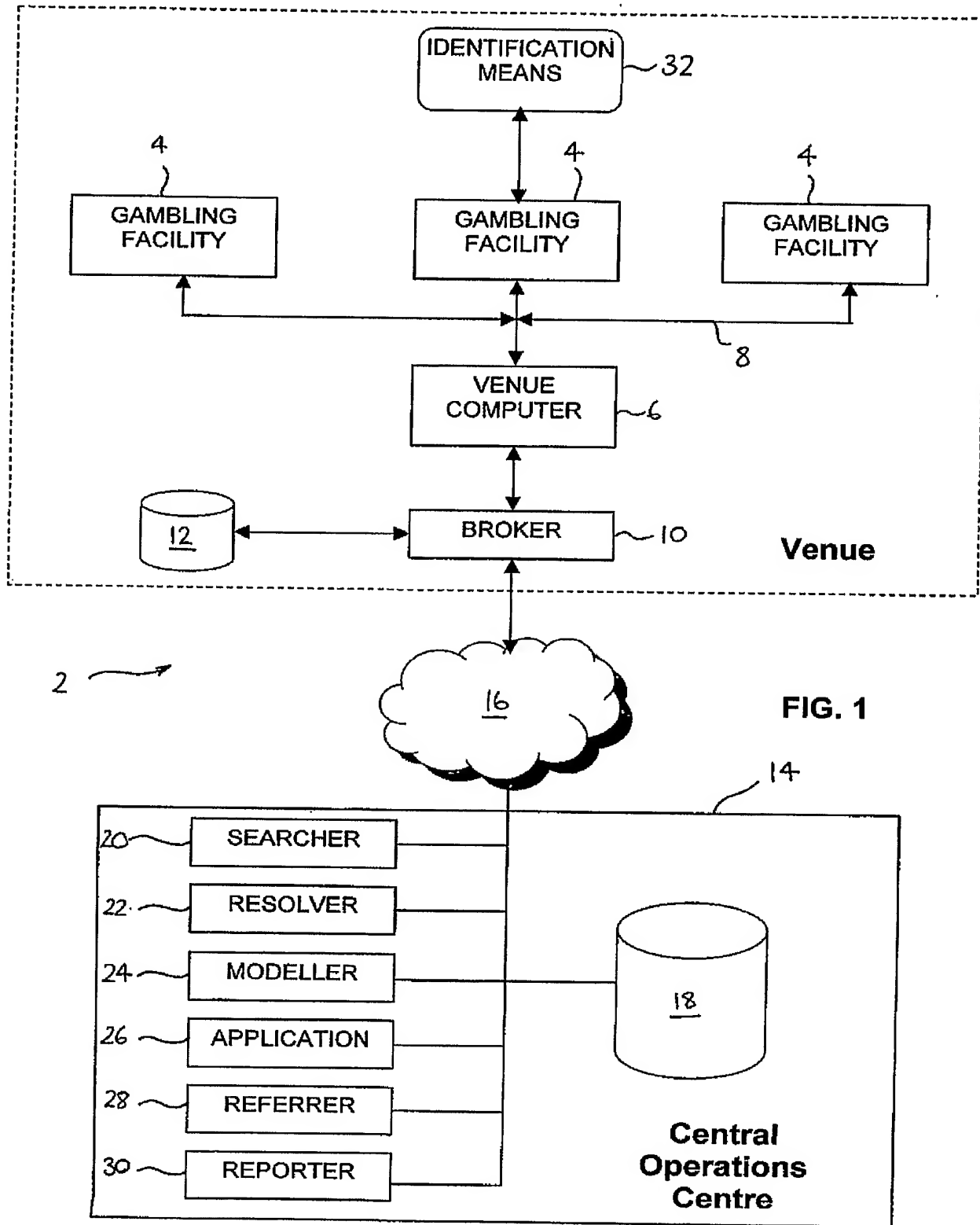
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Dated this Twenty-Seventh day of August 2003

JOHN THOMAS FLANAGAN

By his Patent Attorneys

FISHER ADAMS KELLY



IDENTIFICATION MEANS

Card Option 1

- Card number (allocated)
- Sex
- Disposable income
- Age range
- *Proof of Age*
 - Optional:
 - self imposed limits
 - Self initiated blocks
 - Name & Address, email
 - DOB

Card Option 2

- Card number (allocated)
- Name & address
email of cardholder
- DOB & Sex
- Disposable income
- *Proof of ID*
 - Optional:
 - self imposed limits
 - self Initiated blocks

32

FIG. 2

32

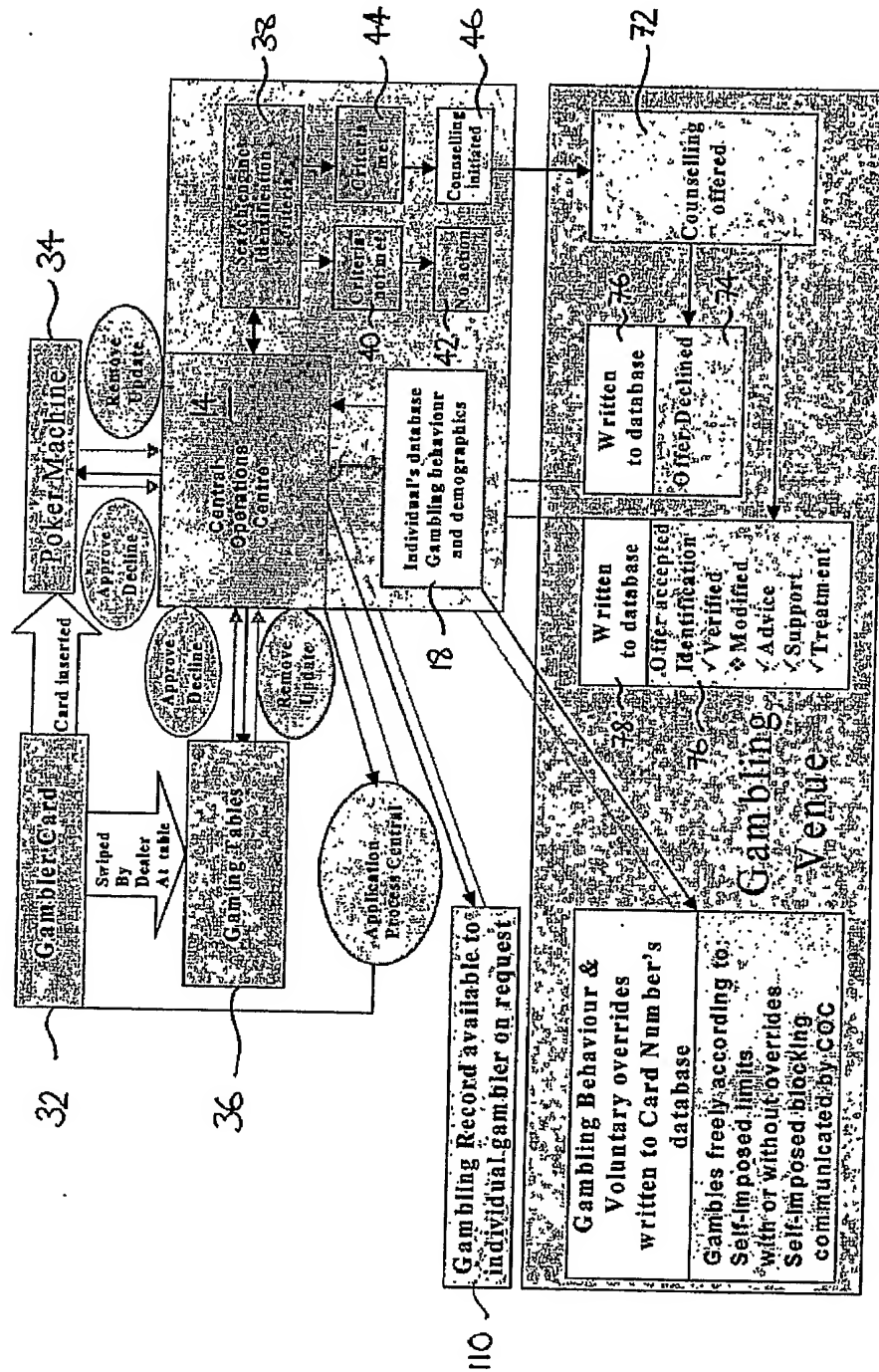


FIG. 3

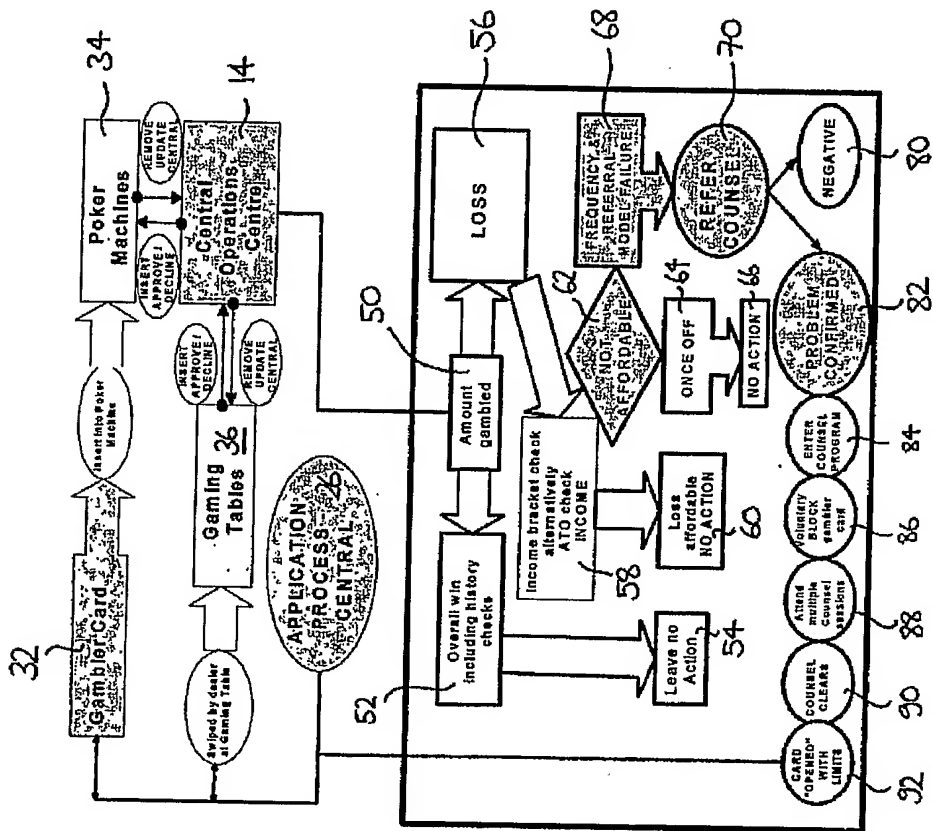


FIG. 4

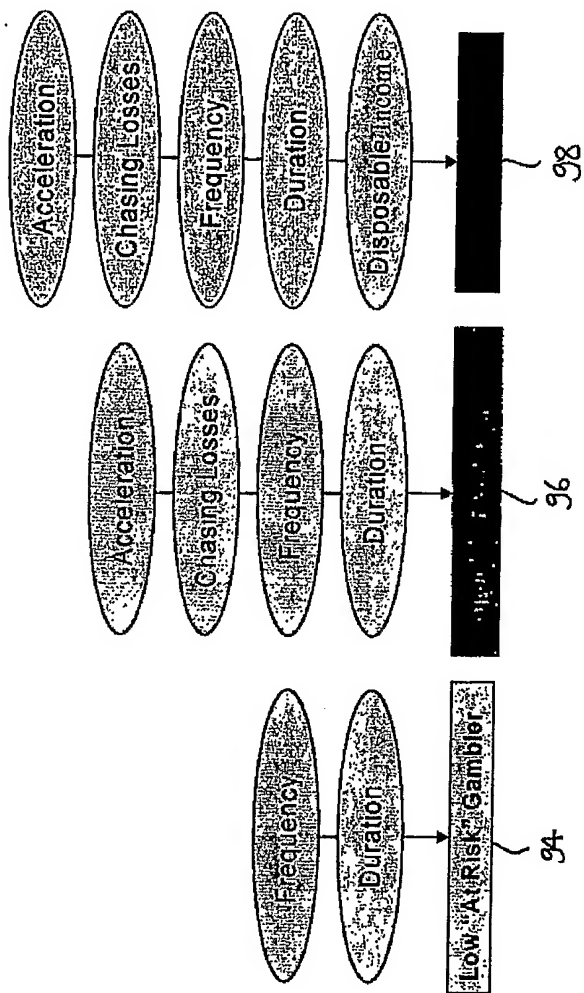


FIG. 5

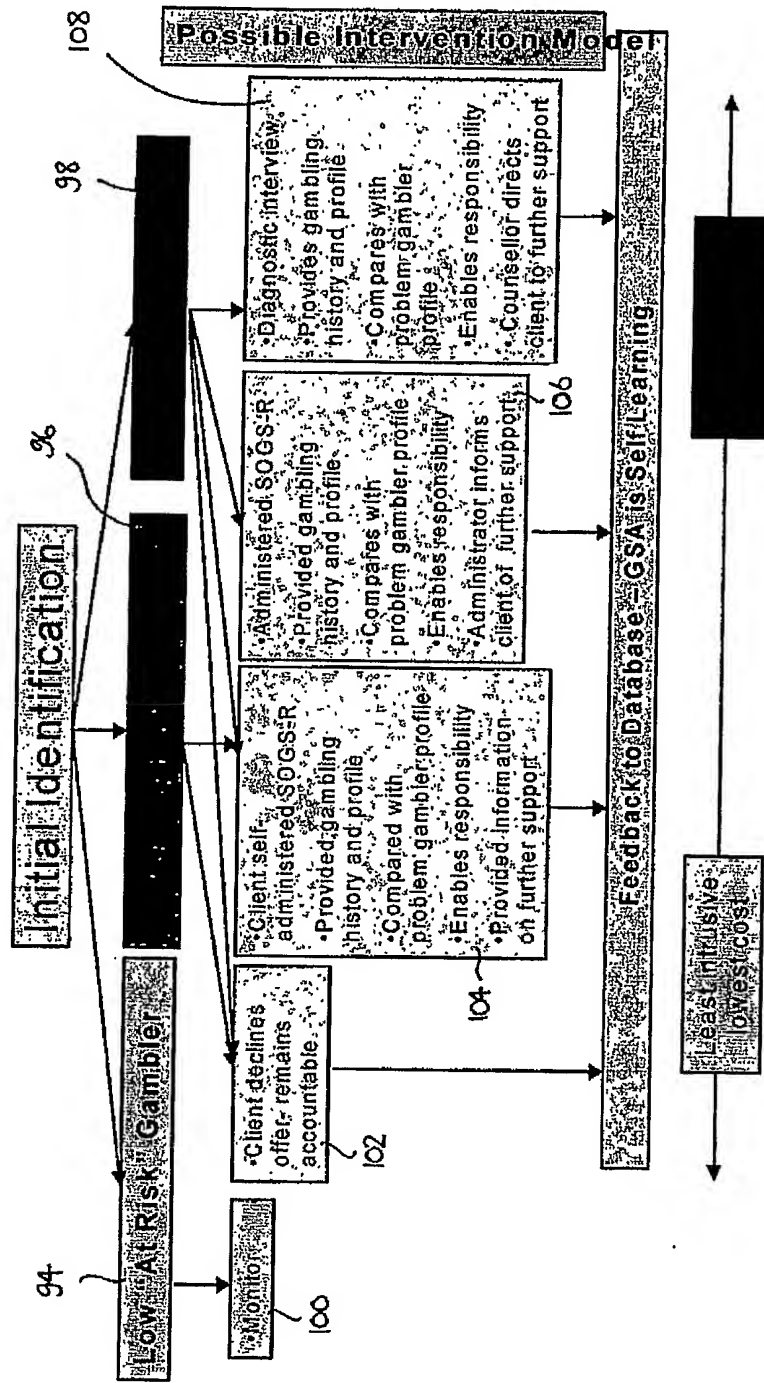


FIG. 6